God's Care over his Vineyard:

OR, A

SERMON

PREACH'D at

SOULDERN in *Oxfordshire*,

ON

JANUARY the 20*th* 17$^{14}_{15}$.

Being the DAY of

Thanksgiving to Almighty God, for bringing His Majesty to a Peaceable and Quiet Possession of the *Throne*, and thereby Disappointing the Designs of the Pretender and his Adherents.

By *NATH. GOODWIN*, A. M.

LONDON, Read.

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READER,

I *Propos'd in this Discourse to awaken that Insensibility of God's Favours Men are generally overrun with. Such Carelesness as is spread over the face of Religion, devours the Beauty of Holiness, as, commonly, a sordid Retirement divests us of Humanity.*

The Solemnity of this Day not only celebrates great Benefits, but is so in it self as it brightens the Mind with publick Opportunities of Joy and Thanksgiving.

'Twas this Consideration, together with what the Text suggesteth,

geſteth, that led me to mention the Happineſs of our Civil Government, wherein I have been very ſhort, expreſſing my ſelf almoſt in the very Words of an Eminent Prelate of our Church; The late Injunction of our moſt Gracious Sovereign is of the laſt Importance to heal our unhappy Diviſions, and therefore ought religiouſly to be obſerved by that Order, to which it hath pleaſed God to call me.

Iſaiah

Isaiah V. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Now will I sing to my beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard; my beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill.

And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein, and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, *and Men of* Judah, *judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard,*

What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

THE Church is usually compared in Scripture to a Vineyard: As the one is cultivated by the Labours of the Body, so the other employs the Mind; this conducing to the Nourishment of the Soul, as the other doth to bodily Sustenance;

nance; and therefore the Comparison is very suitable, as most likely to leave an Impression upon the Mind from what it suggesteth in so familiar an Instance.

I know, that in this Parable is couch'd a severe Reprimand to the People of *Israel* for their Disobedience and abominable Doings, as the following Part of the Chapter fully declares, an heinous Provocation under so holy an Institution, and what might justly require a Day of Humiliation among them. But the main Purport of it being to set forth God as a careful Protector of his Church and People, I shall limit my present Discourse to that Part only, as a proper Subject for this Day's Solemnity. *Now will I sing to my beloved a song touching his vineyard: my beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: What can be more done to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?*

Before we apply these Words of the Text to our selves, we should cast an Eye upon the *Jewish* Oeconomy, over which the divine Protection presided eminently in several respects. The Situation of their Country was on a *Fruitful Hill*; *yea, they had a goodly heritage*, the Land of *Canaan*, a *Land flourishing with Milk and Honey*, surpassing most Countries in the World in Fertility and Pleasantness. And though in Bigness not half so large as the Kingdom of *England*, yet was it fill'd with such Numbers of rich Cities and Towns, and bless'd with such a sweet Temperature of Air,

Air, that God thought fit to assign it to the Father of the Faithful by Promise, for an Habitation to his Posterity, as a Type of the Celestial *Canaan*, the Seat of the most perfect Felicity: Wherein his Chosen did *multiply even as the sand on the sea-shore*: As appears from the vast Armies which they sent into the Field; particularly when *Abijah*, the Second King of *Judah* (after the Division of the Tribes) led an Army of *four hundred thousand men against* Jeroboam *King of* Israel, *who brought double the number*, 2 Chron. cap. 13. These great Advantages (which Nature furnish'd them withal) were heighten'd and secur'd by the best of Governments; a Monarchy administred by Laws, as *Samuel* plainly intimates, in his First Book, Cap. 10, 25. *And* Samuel *told the people the manner of the Kingdom, and wrote it in a Book, and laid it up before the Lord.*

But the most valuable Advantage they enjoy'd, was the Profession of the True Religion: For besides the Moral Law which was the purest Impression (and common to all the Sons of *Adam* and *Noah*) they were sanctify'd to God by certain Rites and Ceremonies; partly for the more orderly Worship of God, and partly to preserve the People from Idolatry, but principally to be Types and Figures of the Evangelical State; in all which we find a Simplicity, a Purity, a Majesty, a Gravity, a Mo-

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desty and Decency; to which if we compare the Rituals of any other Profession than in use throughout the World, they appear as Dung and Dross, and are an Heap of impure, superstitious Absurdities. This miraculous, venerable Administration was erected into an Establishment from Revelations given by Oracles, Prophets, and Angels, and taught in a Language common to them all, not to be altered or destroyed by the Will of their Kings, or the Inclinarions of the People, being secured in the main by a peculiar Promise of God, till *Shiloh* the *Messiah* came to settle a new Revelation, and to preach the glad Tidings of the Gospel. Judge ye *if the People were not happy in such a case, yea, happy for having the Lord for their God.* How black was their Ingratitude, in return for such signal Favours bestowed upon them; yea, how much worse did it render them, *than the Beast that perish:* Well might God expostulate with them in the Words of the Text; *Know, O Inhabitants, of* Jerusalem, *and ye Men of* Judah, *judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard; what could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?*

To bring this Consideration home to our selves; our own native Land, like that of *Canaan*, is both fruitful and pleasant. We have no

no large Tracts of Sandy Deserts, or wild unwholsome Forrests, the Dens and Refuge for ravenous Beasts and venomous Serpents, being freer from what is hurtful and noysom, than any other Part of *Europe*. * *Tacitus*, a *Roman* Historian, observes indeed, *that our Weather is rather too cloudy*; but they are such Clouds as drop Fatness, no Country exceeding it for Food and Plenty: The Heaths being stock'd with a World of Sheep, the Pastures with great Number of Cattel, the Parks and Forrests with fallow Deer beyond compare; besides large and plentiful Warrens, great Store of wild and tame Fowl, eatable Roots and Herbs, and Fruits of most sorts; and so constant and kind are the Returns of the Seasons for all these Dainties, and Variety of Food, that the Land hath not felt a Famine for several Ages. God hath *blessed our Earth, and made it very plenteous: he sendeth the Springs into the Valleys which stand thick with Corn; and the Hills rejoyce on every side.* The Rivers furnish us with all manner of Fish, together with the Sea, which *encompasseth us as it were a shield.*

* *Cœlum crebris imbribus & nubibus fœdum.* Tacit. Agricol.

Psal. 65.

For Cloathing *England* is famous all the World over; to make Linnen also there is a great deal of good and proper Soil for Flax and Hemp; for Building, Plenty of Timber, and Stones, Lime and Brick; Stores of Mines abounding with Iron, Lead, and other subter-

raneous Treasures: So that we appear almost all-sufficient within our selves, being so well provided of all Necessaries from the Product of our own Country, that in Days of Old Foreigners came to seek for our Goods, before our Ancestors wanted any of theirs in Exchange; and we seem rather now to carry on a Trade to oblige the World, and to abound in Superfluities, than to supply real Wants; and all this we enjoy in a sweet Temperature of Air, not subject to excessive sultry Heats, or extream Cold: *The Sun doth not burn us by Day, and we are able to abide the Frosts.*

To this Clemency of the Air, we may ascribe that Vivacity of Temper, and graceful Complexion, which appears generally in our Natives; though in a great measure the Constitution of our Government contributeth hereto: Under which most live at Ease, and free from those slavish Drudgeries, and wretched Hardships other Nations are harrassed with, where Tyranny and hard Dominion bear Sway; changing the chearful Countenance of Liberty, into a sordid servile Look, even in Things as well as Men.

Some object, That this admirable Model of our Government is liable to frequent *Struggles and Commotions.* The two contending Parties of the Nation, assisted by the Madness of the People, ever supplanting one another; endea-

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vouring on the one hand to introduce Arbitrary Power, and on the other meer Anarchy: *But we have hitherto preserved the Balance, nicely poised between the Extreams of too much Liberty, and too much Power. Where the Prince is cloath'd with a Prerogative that enables him to do all the Good he hath a Mind to, and wants no Degree of Authority but what a good Prince would not, and a bad one ought not to have, where he rules, though not absolutely, yet gloriously, because he governs Men, and not Slaves.* Bishop of Rochester.

I am constrained to speak somewhat on this joyful Day, to remind you of our publick Happiness, even in a natural and political Capacity, though I chiefly propose from my Text (and what is most becoming the Place where I stand) to treat of those Blessings and Comforts we of this Nation enjoy, in respect of our Religion, our Reform'd Establish'd Church. *My beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful Hill*, that is, a Church. The Gospel reach'd this Corner of the Earth in the earliest Ages of Christianity. *Guildas*, an old *British* Historian, affirming that the *Britains* received the Gospel when it was first published to the World; and that it was first preached here in its native Purity and Simplicity, we have good grounds to believe, some of our Bishops assisting at the most Orthodox Councils of those Primitive Times: 'Tis likewise evident that we continued independent of

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any foreign Jurisdiction down to the 7th Century. A Clergyman of great Piety and Learning answering St. *Austin*, the Monk, at the Synod of *Worcester* (convened with a Design of advancing the Papal Authority) *That they (even the* British *Clergy) did owe the Subjection of Brotherly Kindness and Charity to the Church of God, to the Bishop of* Rome, *and to all Christians: But other Obedience than that, they did not know to be due to him whom they called Pope:* Some Ages afterwards when Popery prevail'd, in that universal Wreck of good Literature and sound Morality, *England* had its share; yet came we in very early to the Reformation, being one of the first who broke that Charm of Superstition and Error; retrenching the Abuses of that adulterated Communion, without maiming the Essentials of the true; retaining all that was Orthodox and warrantable, without admitting any Mixtute of their fabulous Legends, corrupted Traditions, or new-fangled Fopperies: and to make this Assertion plain and undeniable, I need only mention to you some Doctrines and Practises which we have removed, and they still retain to their Shame and Reproach. Such are their Pretences to Infallibility, that monstrous Absurdity of Transubstantiation, their Works of Super-errogation, and Traffick in Indulgencies. Add to these their performing divine Service in an unknown Tongue, their administring the Sacrament in one kind, the Wor-

Dinoth. Collier's Dict. Vol. 3.

Worshipping of Images, adoring the Bread and Wine in the Eucharist, their Invocation of Saints, and such like gross Errors, so entirely and fully confuted by the Learned Pens of the last Age, wfth Arguments enforc'd from the clearest Reasons, from the concurrent Testimony of Primitive Christians, and that antient Adversary of theirs, the Scriptures, that their Perseveranre in such an absurd way of Worship, must be ascrib'd chiefly to an obstinate Bigottry, which *refuseth to hear the Voice of the Charmers Charm, though never so wisely: and like* Babylon *of old, will not be healed.*

Notwithstanding these laborious Works of our learned Divines prove ineffectual to convert them who hate to be reformed, yet are they of admirable Use to fence our own Church: A Church, that stands at this Day the Bulwark and Glory of the Reformation; wherein Christianity is restored to its primitive Purity and Simplicity, imposing no dangerous Error on our Belief, or sinful Superstitions on our Practice, but containing all Things that make for the End of our Faith, and the Salvation of our Souls; what teaches the Rules of holy Obedience, the Methods of Repentance and Reconciliation for our past Sins, by instructing us in that Faith and Doctrine Christ and his Apostles delivered, the primitive Church received; by affording us the comfortable Administration of those Sacraments

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our Saviour instituted, and assisting us with all the Helps to Devotion the Scriptures warrant and prescribe. The Modes and Forms of our publick Worship are decent and edifying, constant Hours for divine Service appointed, and the Preaching Part kept up with a solemn Diligence and a persuasive Spirit. This Model is adorn'd with an excellent Hierarchy, recommended down to us from the First and Purest Ages of the Church, over which, our gracious Sovereign resideth *a nursing Father, who is as an Angel of God to discern Good from Bad.* A Branch of our Royal Family that hath fortunately escaped the dangerous Attacks of Popery, and is become *unto us a Minister for Good.* One who is entirely bound up in the Protestant Interest, and on whose Care and unblemish'd Fideltiy, under the Protection of Providence, we may confidently repose the Security of our Religion. And now, O ye Inhabitants of these Isles, consider the manifold Blessings this Day's Solemnity sets before you; how God *hath fenced your Vineyard, the Church, and gathered out the Stones thereof,* hath freed you from the Errors and Superstitions of Popery, and set over you a King, a Defender of the true Faith, and confirmed to you the Hopes of a Protestant Succession in his Royal Issue. *What could have been more done to your Vineyard, that hath not been done in it? Wherefore, when God looked that it should bring forth Grapes, brought it forth wild*

wild Grapes? Can such signal Mercies prove ineffectual to amend us, and to make us thankful? When God justly expects Fruits unto Holiness, and Praises due to him for his favourable Protection, should we in Return, affront him with Disobedience and Repining? Far be such Disingenuity and Ingratitude from us. There's no greater Evidence in the World, of a base perverse Temper, than not to be wrought upon by Kindness, not to be obliged by Favours: This was the Disposition of the *Jews*, whose Happiness is so much celebrated in the Text: *I looked for Judgment (saith the Lord) and behold Oppression; for Righteousness, and behold a Cry; a faithless and stubborn Generation, that set not their Heart aright, and whose Spirit cleaved not stedfastly unto God. Therefore did he consume their Days in Vanity, and their Years in Trouble.*——— No Nation was ever so happy (such is the Corruption of human Nature, wherein a Spirit of Disobedience hath not reign'd. Among ourselves, too many (God knoweth) are unthankful and uneasy, cursing at the Government, and scarce able to forbear censuring the Occasion of this Day. No favourable Construction can, or ought to be put upon such ungrateful Murmurings; and let Mens Pretences be never so specious, (having Religion and Loyalty *in their Mouths*, whilst *they speak evil of Dignities* from their Hearts) depend upon't, their Designs are mischievous, that their Dissent

from the publick Good proceeds not from their Reason and Conscience, but from Pride, Disgust, or some foolish Humour, and all honest Men that bare a Regard to the Good of their Country, to the quiet Enjoyment of their Religion, ought to avoid their Company, or to despise their Suggestions, as they would not be made Tools to their Faction and Perverseness, as they would escape those miserable Inconveniences, Distractions and tragical Ends, that attend such as are *given to Change, despising Government.* That Kings have long Hands, is a proverbial Saying, and the Wise Man advises us *not to curse the King, no, not in Thought, nor the Rich in our Bed-chamber, for a Bird of the Air shall carry the Voice, and that which hath Wings shall tell the Matter.* They that are listed into a Faction, or a Party, may be industrious enough to promote some petty private Interest, but cannot be good Subjects in a publick Capacity. Their Understandings are so clouded with Prejudice, or Misrepresentation of Things, that they are uncapable of admitting any Instruction but what is ting'd with their own Bigotry. I have not *studied to please Men* in this Way, taking it sufficient in the Discharge of my Duty, to give impartial, sincere Advice for the Peace of the Church and Nation in General: And hereupon, I beseech you, my Brethren, and charge you, that you offer up unfeigned Thanks for these great Mercies this joyful Day sets before you, wherein

Eccl. 10. 20.

in we celebrate God's signal Care over us, in seating our present Sovereign upon the Throne, without any Opposition, or Bloodshed, any Tumult, or Disorder, which we must wholly ascribe to an overruling Providence, which *delights to do us good, and thinks Thoughts of Peace towards us*; whilst our own Hands were ready to pull down Ruin upon our Heads, and in all Probabillty, must have involved us in Confusion and Misery, had we been left to ourselves, to do as our own Animosities and Discontents, our own Divisions and factious Humours guided us. But our greatest Hopes are now, that the wise Conduct of his present Majesty will put a Stop to these unhappy Feuds, and odious Distinctions, kindled and upheld among us, by the ill Designs of restless, ambitious Men, the Expectations of a Popish Heir being defeated by the strictest Laws, and a numerous Issue in the Protestant Line, and the Cry of the Churches Danger over by his Majesty's Accession to the Throne, who is a zealous Protector of the Protestant Interest in general, but more especially of the Church of *England*, as a late Injunction of his may fully assure us, wherein are contained Matters of the greatest Importance for the Preservation of the Peace and Unity of the Church, together with the Purity of the Christian Faith, and also for the preserving the Peace and Quiet of the State. 12. W. & M.

Therefore, let us unanimouſly and cheerfully come into ſuch princely Meaſures for the common Good, let us heartily endeavour in our proper Stations and Callings, to ſupport a Government ſo happily eſtabliſh'd, ſo wiſely conſtituted in all its Parts, wherein our Religion, our Rights and Liberties, and all that is dear to us, are ſecured from Tyranny and Oppreſſion, from the Rage of a perſecuting Spirit, and the rude Inſults of Enthuſiaſm. Let us not, under any Pretence whatſoever, foment Animoſities and groundleſs Suſpicions, to weaken the Hands of the Government, to prevent the promoting and perfecting of worthy Deſigns for our own Good, and that of our lateſt Poſterity. But as we bear a Regard to our ſacred Oaths of Allegiance, believe and know Submiſſion to Authority to be a Chriſtian Duty; as we deſire the Intereſt and Happineſs of that Country wherein we dwell, would prevent bloody Maſſacres, the moſt deplorable Confuſion and Dread, that they which hate us ſhould rule over us, to be *Pricks in our Eyes, and Thorns in our Fleſh.* As we preſume now to beg of God a Continuation of his Favours and would not fruſtrate his merciful Deſigns to do us good; let us, with united Affections, *offer up unto God, Thankſgiving, a Lord mighty to ſave,* who hath *done ſo great Things for us already whereof we now rejoyce.* We ſhould be utterly inexcuſable, ſhould *we again break the Commandments, and joyn again in Affinity with a People*

ple in their Abominations. Wouldst not Thou, O Lord, be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no Remnant or Escaping? Ez: 9: 14.

To Conclude, Don't appear before God with a double Mind, or diffident of his gracious Aid, to comfort and support us in the Way he sets before us. But take with you the Advice of a late modest, and sincerely pious Preacher, as the surest and safest Way to reduce things to a happy and firm Composure, which is, *to turn frequent Sollicitors to the Throne of Grace*, that God would vouchsafe to influence and *prosper our publick Proceedings*; and instead of reproving or murmuring at supposed Disorders of State, *or setting up for smart Judges in Politicks, humbly request of God Almighty, the sovereign Governour and sole Disposer of all things, that he would lead his Vicegerents into the Management of the Charge by himself committed unto them*; so that under them we may lead a quiet and peaceable Life in all Godliness and Honesty. Dr. Barrow.

And to be careful for Nothing, but in every Thing, by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, to make our Requests known unto God. Phil: 4: 6.

FINIS.